

**To:** 'Doan, Stephanie (ATSDR/DCHI/OD)'[ffu4@cdc.gov]  
**From:** Strausbaugh, Dan  
**Sent:** Mon 8/10/2015 10:17:47 PM  
**Subject:** FW: Internal ATSDR Regional Activities Update 2015AUG06-07-->Region 8 Emergency Response Event: Gold King Mine Tailings Impoundment Breach, Durango, CO

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**From:** Strausbaugh, Dan

**Sent:** Friday, August 07, 2015 11:34 AM

**To:** Stephens, James W. (ATSDR/DCHI/OD); Forrester, Tina (ATSDR/DCHI/OD); Cassandra V Smith

**Cc:** Poulet, Chris; Strausbaugh, Dan; McBreairty, Susan J. (ATSDR/OCOM); Sudweeks, Scott

**Subject:** Internal ATSDR Regional Activities Update 2015AUG06-07-->Region 8 Emergency Response Event: Gold King Mine Tailings Impoundment Breach, Durango, CO

**Date Report Prepared:** August 7, 2015 at 1130hrs (RMT)

**Subject:** ATSDR Region 8 Emergency Response Event Update

**Event:** Gold King Mine tailings retention pond blowout (2015AUG05) and resulting contaminant plume along Animas River, Durango CO

2015AUG06-07

Prepared by Chris Poulet, ATSDR/R8 and Dan Strausbaugh, ATSDR/R8/RD

Begin Update:

AUG06

∇ Under the advice (Prudent Public Health Precautions) of EPA, the City of Durango closed the river to recreation until further notice well in advance of the plume's arrival in Durango

∇ Municipal water supply and drinking water systems— Apparently NOT IMPACTED

o The primary drinking water source for the City of Durango is from nearby reservoirs

o River intakes used to augment the municipal water system were also closed in advance

∇ Plume passed through Durango on the Animas River at around 1800 on 8/6. Plume was expected to move along the Animas River in Durango fairly quickly

∇ EPA collected pH data taken with a pH meter at Bakers Bridge 10 miles upstream from Durango. As the plume of sediment passed this point...pH dropped from 7 to 5.5-5.6

∇ EPA collected baseline data for metals concentration collected before the blowout from various sampling points along the Animas River

∇ EPA has collected 19 water samples from the animas river on 6/5 and 15 samples on 6/6 and is expected to have analysis results by 12-1300 on AUG6/7

∇ EPA indicated that it will compare these results with baseline information if appropriate

∇ EPA may ask ATSDR to evaluate the data when it becomes available, but EPA likely to rely on internal resources (EPA/R8/Technical Services Branch) to interpret data

∇ EPA received request for public health assistance from the San Juan Basin Health Department (SJBHD) in Silverton, CO at 1600hrs

∇ Request was immediately referred to ATSDR for appropriate follow-up

∇ ATSDR Regional Rep. contacted SJBHD executive director at 1745hrs with ATSDR/DCHI/Medical Officer

- o SJBHD request was for assistance developing public health messages in response to resident's exposure concerns
- o Water sample analysis (metals) not completed/available at time of call. ATSDR was only able to respond to concerns about pH drop from 7 to 5.5 in the Animas River, downstream of Silverton
- o ATSDR indicated that pH 5.5 was comparable to that of rainwater
- o ATSDR indicated any symptoms such as eye irritation occurring soon after exposure to water from the plume could be treated symptomatically by a physician. For example eye irritation would be treated by irrigation or rinsing. Showering as one normally would after spending time in the river would also be a good idea after contact with water from the plume.
- o SJBHD indicated they might need assistance developing language for a public health statement about the water sampling results from the mine waste plume in the Animas River
- o ATSDR provided its Denver office contact information to the SJBHD should further assistance be needed
- o The SJBHD executive director indicated her appreciation for ATSDR's timely response and assistance from the ATSDR/DCHI Medical Officer
- ∇ EPA or the SJBHD may request ATSDR assistance for a public health interpretation of the data on AUG07....although as of AUG06, the EPA technical services branch chief indicates a readiness to do so for the RA visit to Durango on AUG07

07AUG

- ∇ EPA will conduct a public meeting/media event on 07AUG @1330(RMT)
- ∇ EPA requested short statement EPA can use during public meeting indicating EPA coordination with ATSDR during event
- o EPA is coordinating with ATSDR in response to public health concerns/questions associated with the mine waste plume. Public health questions/concerns should be directed to Chris Poulet, ATSDR/R8 at 303-312-7013.
- ∇ EPA has requested ATSDR provide generic public health information for COC's (aluminum, copper and zinc/oxides) to respond to public questions/concerns during the public meeting
- o ATSDR is preparing a request for assistance to the DTHHS/ER to prepare these

materials

∇ ATSDR/R8 has coordinated ATSDR response activities with the ATSDR/NCEH/OC and ATSDR/DTHHS/ER

End of Update

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